

ANNUAL REPORT
FOR
MEATH LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
2020

1.0 Chief Officer's Statement

LCDC's are required under Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2014 (S128B of the Local Government Act 2001) to prepare, adopt and submit an annual report to the Local Authority no later than the 31st March each year in respect of the performance of its functions in the previous year.

This report outlines progress in respect of the various LCDC functions during 2020.

Since the submission of the last report, Meath LCDC and its sub-groups had a busy and productive year which saw Covid-19 bringing additional challenges to how programmes were delivered. The LCDC itself had to adapt to a new way of working with all meetings taking place remotely via the Zoom platform. Each member has embraced this challenge and the committee continue to deliver on the commitments for each of the programmes.

A current Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 is ongoing with Meath Partnership as the Programme Implementer. The actions set out in the 2020 Annual Plan were completed and significant progress was made with the relevant groups. The sub-committee continue to work constructively in its review and monitoring of the SICAP programme.

The LCDC acts as the Local Action Group (LAG) for the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 in Meath. The LEADER programme has added to the already significant role played by the LCDC in the oversight of public funding to bring about the improved social, economic and community development of the County.

During 2020, there was huge demand for funding under the LEADER programme with 100% of the budget committed at the end of 2020. As per previous LEADER programmes, claims for payment from the promoters continued to increase and will continue to increase as all works are completed and inspected. At the end of 2020, there were 107 projects approved for funding with sixty-nine claims already paid out to applicants. A number of projects found their progress hampered by the Covid-19 restrictions and sought extensions to the term for project completion, a number of these went to a postal vote and term extensions were granted in all cases.

The LCDC managed, implemented and collaborated in relation to a number of public-funded programmes under its remit which included the Community Enhancement Programme and the Covid-19 Emergency Fund. The LCDC ensured that these schemes complied with and delivered on some of the actions in the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).

Progress reports have been presented to the LCDC on a regular basis on the delivery of actions in the LECF.

The Meath LCDC has 19 members and during 2020 there were 2 changes in membership with one new Councillor following the election to the Seanad of Cllr Annie Hoey and Ita McGuigan, Údarás na Gaeltachta was replaced in late 2020.

Replacements were sought and Cllr Elaine McGinty attended her first meeting in June 2020 and Pádraicín Bheilbigh, Údarás na Gaeltachta attended her first meeting in September 2020.

Following a very successful tenure, John Higgins stepped down as chairperson of the LCDC. Suzanne Brady was elected the new chairperson of the LCDC in October 2020 with Seamus McGee as vice Chairperson. I'd like to thank John for his work as chairperson and wish Suzanne every success in her new role.

At the end of 2020 there were 2 vacancies on the LCDC due to the resignations of Dorothy Kerrigan, HSE and John Higgins, Community & Voluntary Sector.

I would like to sincerely thank the outgoing members for their contribution to the LCDC during their tenure.

The Membership of the LCDC at 31st December 2020 was:

- Ms Jackie Maguire, Chief Executive, MCC
- Cllr Yemi Adenuga
- Cllr Elaine McGinty
- Cllr Mike Bray
- Ms. Paul Carroll, Dept of Employment Affairs & Social Protection
- Ms Sadie Ward McDermott, Louth / Meath Education & Training Board
- Vacant Health Service Executive
- Ms. Pádraicín Bheilbigh, Údarás na Gaeltachta
- Mr Joe English, Local Enterprise Office
- Mr Michael Ludlow, Meath Partnership
- Mr Gareth O'Brien, Community Sector
- Vacant (Community Sector)
- Ms Susuana Komolafe, Social Inclusion Sector
- Ms Anna Melnick, Social Inclusion Sector
- Mr Donna Farrell, Business Sector
- Ms Suzanne Brady, Environmental Sector (Chairperson)
- Mr Seamus McGee, Farming Sector
- Mr Noel Maguire, Trade Union Sector
- Ms Geraldine Hogarty, Youth Work Ireland Meath

During 2020 a total of 10 meetings were held. Dates of the meetings are listed below:

- 28th February 2020
- 27th March 2020 (LAG only)
- 24th April 2020
- 29th May 2020
- 26th June 2020
- 31st July 2020
- 25th September 2020
- 23rd October 2020
- 27th November 2020
- 18th December (LAG Only)

As set out in the Standing Orders, the quorum for LCDC meetings is 11 and for LAG meetings is 10. All meetings that took place in 2020 met the requirement for the quorum. No meetings during 2020 had full attendance and the meeting in January (LCDC & LAG) had to be cancelled due to lack of a quorum.

I look forward to supporting the LCDC in carrying out its functions during 2021.

Fiona Fallon
Chief Officer

2.0 Progress on the Community Elements of LECP

The LECP was prepared in a collaborative manner with the various agencies. The LCDC monitors and reviews the implementation of the LECP with the lead agencies who submit their progress updates on actions to the LCDC on a regular basis.

While acknowledging the initial successes in the implementation of the LECP it is recognised that ongoing progress requires continuous engagement between the various agencies and partners involved. As set out in 2019, of the 55 actions progressed, 6 miscellaneous actions could not be progressed due to resource issues.

The Meath LCDC will continue to work in collaboration with all the relevant parties to deliver on the actions as identified in the LECP which is due to expire in 2021.

3.0 Implementation, Management & Oversight of Public-Funded Programmes

- **LEADER (RDP) 2014 – 2020**

The implementation of the LEADER programme continued during 2020 with 32 projects approved during the year by the LAG following the recommendation by the Independent Evaluation Committee (IEC). The LEADER budget for Meath has now been 100% committed. Thirty-three claims were submitted by the promoter and paid during 2020. In total 26% of approved grants have been drawn down by the end of 2020. Submission of claims will be ongoing over the 12 months.

Eligible Expressions of Interest's continued to be received under the rolling calls and there was three targeted calls approved at the March LAG meeting. These were under Local Historical Projects under Heritage and Culture, Small scale renewable energy projects and Water resources. However only one targeted call was run under Water Resources. From this there were 4 expressions of interest submitted but no applications mainly due to the impact of Covid. It is worth noting that these projects are proceeding outside the scope of the closed call and will be considered for funding under the transitional programme.

The Rural Development Programme monitoring committee met twice during 2020 - in February and September to review progress of the programme.

Given the impact of Covid on delivery of the LEADER programme, the Department of Rural and Community Development advised that the

programme would be extended until 31st March 2021. From 1st April 2021, a Transitional LEADER programme would be introduced which would run until 31st December 2022. Following this the next LEADER programme would commence. The Transitional LEADER programme is be funded through a combination of exchequer and EU funding.

- **Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022**

SICAP is a national programme which aims to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnership between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies. The aim of SICAP is to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality through local, regional and national engagement and collaboration.

The SICAP sub committee met a number of times in 2020 to review mid-year and end of year progress with the programme implementer. The targets set under Goal 1 (groups) and Goal 2 (individuals) were exceeded in 2020 with an allocated budget of €405,136. There has been very good engagement between the SICAP sub-group and the PI in raising issues that should be addressed or progressed. The main challenge during 2020 was the Covid-19 pandemic which forced a new way of doing things to engage with groups and individuals. Remotely working with groups did prove successful however engaging with individuals proved more challenging due to their complex needs.

- **Funding Schemes**

A number of funding initiatives were made available to the LCDC in order to recommend funding allocations to applicant groups.

The Community Enhancement programme continued again in 2020. There were two allocations - €62,883 for the standard CEP scheme with an additional €157,594 for community buildings. The requirement to have 30% of the fund ring-fenced for small capital works up to a maximum of €1,000 and the rest of the fund allocated towards larger capital projects also remained in place. A total of 60 grants were awarded by the LCDC with projects to be completed by end of March 2021.

In April 2020, the Covid-19 Emergency Fund was announced to assist groups with costs that they would have incurred when taking part in the Community

Call and also assisting with costs associated with getting their buildings Covid ready. Meath County Council was allocated €88,912 and 84 groups received assistance under this scheme.

This funding has been a welcome investment in the communities at a time when traditional fund-raising options are curtailed and how work was carried out was very restricted.

4.0 Joint Louth Meath Migrant Integration Strategy

In February 2020 Meath LCDC adopted the Louth Meath Integration Strategy and the document was formally launched by Minister McEntee on 2nd October 2020. The first meeting of the Migrant Integration Forum took place on 20th November 2020 where the actions to be delivered in 2021 were discussed and agreed. The Forum will meet quarterly with the next meeting scheduled for 25th March 2021.

I look forward to working with all members of the LCDC to continue to deliver on the programmes and strategies which will ensure a better quality of life for the communities and individuals of the county.

Suzanne Brady
LCDC Chairperson